

ART FRONT

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BALTIMORE, MD.



"WE HAVE JUST BEGUN TO FIGHT"

19 ARAGON • IRWIN EDMAN • VON WIEGAND • LYND WARD • GORELICK • LA MORE
Art by WEBER • EVERGOOD • MORLEY • ROSENBORG • LA MORE • KLEE • ERNST

NATIONAL ORGANIZATION NEWS

Philadelphia

The Philadelphia Union announces the opening of a new gallery and school to be run by the Union. A group of four painters was represented in the first show—Joseph Presser, Nat Koffman, Charles Naylor and Louis Street. A note on the gallery and the school will appear in ART FRONT soon.

A short time ago the Union fought the purchase of two Bouchers costing \$160,000 by Mr. Widener, director of a fund to purchase paintings for the Wiltach collection. As these funds are spent in the interest of the development of the cultural life of the people, the Union is waging a campaign for contemporary art. A fund of \$300,000 was left jointly to the Parkway Museum and to the Fairmount Park Commission for the purchase of works of art. Under the slogan, "More Living Art," the Union is preparing a campaign to have the money spent on contemporary works.

Boston—Artist Union of Massachusetts, 6 Boylston Place.

The Union has been conferring with the Administration for the establishment of a prevailing wage. At a recent meeting the Administration agreed that the present rate of 99 cents per hour was inadequate payment for professional artists. They are asking for the Union rate of \$2 per hour.

Springfield, Mass.

The Springfield local of the Artists Union had a show at the Springfield Art Museum which received tremendous publicity and applause. Mischa Richter, whose recently completed mural at the Burroughs Newsboys Foundation received wide publicity and recognition, has been asked by the Boston Society of Independent Artists to represent the Union as one of its directors. Jack Levine, a Union member, has been mentioned by Lewis Mumford in the *New Yorker* as the outstanding find of the National Art Project. Agnes Weinrich of the Provincetown Union had an exhibition of her work at the Harley Perkins Gallery. Ross Moffett, president of the Provincetown local of the Artists Union has received a \$2,000 commission to paint a

mural in a Massachusetts postoffice. The Union is active in the newly formed Committee for Organization of All White Collar and Professional W.P.A. workers.

Baltimore

The Baltimore Union is getting an amazing run-around in its efforts to obtain jobs for its needy and eligible members. The negotiations have been as entangled as a labyrinthine maze. It will be impossible in this space to go into any of the details. Irresponsible and buck-passing officials have made it impossible to put these needy artists to work and to cooperate with the artists in getting the maximum usefulness from the project.

Minnesota

Minnesota Artists Union reports 100 per cent project organization as a result of recent events. The Union is preparing action against a proposed 20 per cent reduction of the project which would drop 21 artists.

Cleveland

Cleveland Artists Union reports extensive campaign against lay-offs. This action includes mass meetings, demonstrations and picket lines. A sit-in demonstration and picket line was voted as a further protest.

Chicago

Chicago Artists Union is working closely with other W.P.A. organizations, in a campaign to defeat dismissals and curtailment. The Union at this writing is engaged in a sit-in demonstration at W.P.A. headquarters with a continuous picket line outside.

Cedar Rapids, Iowa

Co-operative Artists, Cedar Rapids, Iowa, sent the following letter of protest to Harry L. Hopkins, W.P.A. Administrator, Washington:

"Following the sweeping endorsement of the New Deal by the November Presidential election we were prepared for the continuation, for the expansion and for the improvement of the projects as a result of the people's vindication of their worth. We were not prepared to see the projects liquidated at a time when their potential value was so generally recog-

nized. We were not prepared to see a complete about-face on the part of the Administration which had so enthusiastically commended the social and cultural worth of the projects."

Woodstock, N. Y.

The Ulster County Artists Union, although numerically one of the smaller Unions was one of the first to take positive action against the proposed curtailment of the Federal Art Project. A sit-in demonstration was effectively carried out by the Union in Woodstock.

Artists Unions Now in the Process of Organizing

Columbus, Ohio, write to Esther Marshall Sills, 239 Oakland Park Avenue, Columbus, Ohio.

Los Angeles, California, write to Walter Herrick, 401 South Fifth Street, Alhambra, California.

Toledo, Ohio, write to Dr. August Hollos, 3239 Cherry Street, Toledo, Ohio.

The Eastern District announces the following new Unions in the field:

Santa Fe Artists Union

The following problems were discussed at the first meeting: 1. The Artist and the Cuatro Centennial; 2. The Economic Position of the Artist; 3. The Rental Policy; 4. The Federal Art Bill; 5. The Artist and the W.P.A.

The Union is formulating a plan to organize a state hook-up of Artists Union in New Mexico. Embracing the already formed unions of Taos and Santa Fe with Albuquerque as the next point of organization. Telegrams of protest against W.P.A. curtailment were forwarded to all officials in Washington.

Detroit

A new organization formed with the policy of economic security for the artist, and immediate affiliation with other Artists Unions.

The "Public Use of Art," general W.P.A. problems and the Federal Arts Bill will occupy the immediate interests of the Union. They are working closely with the American Federation of Government Employees to halt the government's W.P.A. curtailment plan.

CENTRAL ART SUPPLY CO.

62 Third Avenue, Near 11th St. New York

The Bargain Store for the Artist Open Evenings Until 9 p. m.



ART FRONT

DEATH IN ESSENCE

DR. JOSEPH GOEBBELS, a disappointed playwright in his youth, but now, at thirty-nine, quite happy as Nazi propaganda minister, has decreed the death of German criticism in the arts. Many a pseudo-Freudian will see in this nothing more than the personal revenge of a frustrated artist; and many a phony artist will rejoice in the dapper little Nazi's cracks at "those conceited, know-it-all gentlemen," the critics. The fact remains, however, that the decree is one more step in fascism's war upon all freedom of thought and all culture. It does not protect the creative artist; it simply makes creative art impossible. True art, whatever its form, illuminates experience; true criticism clarifies the symbols of art, thereby illuminating both art and experience. If true criticism would develop in contemporary Germany, it would necessarily reveal the horrors of Nazi existence and the sterility of Nazi art. Indeed, the reaction everywhere realizes that we live in an age when but to think is to be full of rebellion against the irredeemable evils of a dying social order. Hence the fascists must prevent thinking at all costs. Art is a high form of thinking; so is criticism, which among other things interprets the artist to his audience. In killing the latter, the Nazis automatically kill the former. For never in the history of man has there been art without criticism—spoken or written. That is, without appreciation, analysis, reaction, comment. Goebbels might as well have announced that the Nazis would improve German crops by destroying the soil. Actually, the reaction hates so-called creative art as much as criticism. Let anyone who doubts this read the arrogant, thick-headed editorial entitled "The Essence of Cheek" which appeared in the *New York Herald Tribune* on December 3. Here the attack is not obliquely upon criticism, but directly upon art. The arch-reactionary H.T. lumps petty racketeers, beggars and artists in the same category.

Its editorial described the committee of men and women who came to protest against the proposed W.P.A. dismissals as "just a well dressed mob of artists, art teachers and the like, protesting their 'right,' as in the case of the Budapest beggars, to exercise their art at public expense."

But what can we think of society which spawns beggars, which throws people out of the work they need and *want*, to crawl through the streets hat in hand pleading for a cup of coffee? And what can we think of a class which pretends to have a monopoly of culture yet throws its artists into the gutter, clubs them when they ask for work, and sneeringly compares them to racketeers? At least we can see the real attitude of the reaction to culture. It is one of unmitigated hatred—and this is the essence of social death.

ROYALTIES FOR THE ARTIST

WE are in receipt of a "Proclamation" from Living American Art, an organization which makes color reproductions of work by American artists, whose objective is the "establishment of an artist's right to benefit from the reproduction and distribution of copies of his work." The "Proclamation" is signed by John Sloan, Alexander Brook, William Gropper, Alfred Stieglitz, Georgia O'Keeffe, John Marin, Marsden Hartley, Arthur Dove. To quote further:

"Today, anyone who reprints a book without authorization by the writer is guilty of piracy; no one may record a composition without the consent of the musician. But paintings are daily copied in large numbers, sold to the general public, all without consulting the artist in most instances. Royalties from the sale of facsimiles can immediately provide a badly needed source of revenue for a group of important workers whose traditional impoverishment appears to be a better established custom than their simple legal rights."

We readily agree that the objective of this drive is correct in its perspective. We must insist, however, that the economic problem facing the artist demands a more basic solution. Artists must direct the greater portion of their understanding and energy towards the organization of the struggle for all unemployed artists, and the eventual permanent Federal Arts Program.

DON'T TRUST THE PAPERS

IN our correspondence section readers will find a letter in which Alfred Stieglitz is severely taken to task for an attack on the project artists attributed to him by the *New York Herald Tribune*. Mr. Stieglitz is said to have implied that he objected to walls being abused by people who had no right to call themselves painters, although he did not deny their right to a decent living in any other capacity.

We find ourselves a little taken aback by the sharpness of our correspondent. We are not so interested in the personality of Mr. Stieglitz as in the issues raised by the report of his remarks. Then too, Mr. Stieglitz told a delegation of artists who visited him after the appearance of the article in the *Tribune* that he had been unfairly quoted, and the *Tribune* was forced to retract its feature in an editorial.

We think, however, that while Mr. Stieglitz did not deserve such an attack, he is not a completely innocent victim. It is one thing to express one's private opinion of a painter's work. It is another to allow that opinion to pass as a public verdict which those very reactionary forces, which Mr. Stieglitz claims to have fought all his life, can use as a weapon to throw thousands of cultural workers into terrible misery.

Mr. Stieglitz's confusion on this point, his tendency to give his personal impressions an aura of universal, pure truth have given rise to misunderstandings at other times between him and the organized artists. It is unfortunate that

he did not think of this when the *Tribune* interviewed him. He should have known that this newspaper would misinterpret him on principle, had he anything favorable in his mind toward the project workers. This was his responsibility and in this he proved himself irresponsible.

WHO ARE THE VANDALS?

FRANCO'S Moors, Germans and Italians are checkmated. They are now engaged in slaughtering the civilian population of Madrid, bombing hospitals

219

By Morris Neuwirth

THE wholesale eviction and clubbing of 219 artists from the New York headquarters of the Federal Art Project by the police has demonstrated to the public at large the complete surrender of the Roosevelt administration to reaction.

The action climaxed weeks of effort on the part of the administration to create, through the introduction of snooping relief investigations, a base of misdirected public opinion, upon which mass dismissals could be affected. The publicity which ensued has ripped away the screen of good will which the administration has affected towards the W.P.A. worker.

A week before, 1200 people, assembled to discuss the entire economic question confronting the artist, at a forum at the Daily Theatre, sent a resolution, introduced by the Artists Union, to President Roosevelt and Harry Hopkins endorsing the idea of a permanent art project. The speakers who included such well known people as Irwin Edman, Professor of Philosophy at Columbia University, Jerome Klein, Art Critic of the New York Post, J. B. Neumann, art dealer and collector of world wide repute, Holger Cahill, national director of the Federal Art Project, Harry Gottlieb, president of the Artists Union, Stuart Davis, president of the Artists Congress, vigorously endorsed the motion and even paid for the shipment of telegrams.

A few days later the administration answered this resolution by announcing a cut of 2,000 from the art projects. Elmer Englehorn, business administrator of the Federal Art Projects, stated clearly to a delegation, that it was the announced intention of the government to immediately curtail and to eventually liquidate the art projects. To quote Englehorn:

and houses. This is how the fascists express chagrin.

Yet, even at this critical moment, the People's Front government has found time to complete the removal of art treasures from the city for safekeeping. This delicate and exacting work was carried out by the Fifth Regiment of Militia, organized by the Communist Party of Spain, the highest politically developed unit of the People's Army. Now we know who the vandals are. Artists, do all you can to help the People's Front in Spain. Keep sending food, clothing and money. This is your battle.

"If the dismissal of non-relief workers in key positions affects the workings of the art projects, and the projects then cannot substantiate their essential character, then the projects will warrant their being disbanded. The government will assume the responsibility for eliminating these projects.

"Let the artist dig ditches, or . . . let him be absorbed in other industries."

This callous attitude of the administration led to immediate action. Artists and art workers mobilized at the Artists Union, and proceeded in a body to the Art Project office to demand that no dismissals take place. Finding Mrs. McMahon, conveniently out for the day, the delegation elected to stay until their demands were granted.

Despite threats and intimidation from Englehorn, who had arrived on the scene, approximately 225, prepared to stay the night. Paul Block, spokesman, addressed the delegation. He placed complete responsibility for any violence which might occur on Englehorn and the W.P.A. administration. Telegrams were sent to Hopkins, Col. Somervell and the President protesting the cuts on the arts project. Personal messages and telegrams were given to a messenger boy on hand, to be delivered to relatives and other dependents. Provisions which had arrived in the form of sandwiches, coffee, etc., were passed around. Soon after, the police arrived on the scene. The building superintendent threatened to have the police eject the entire delegation. Reporters and photographers appeared, flash light bulbs began to pop. The entire group locked arms in a group to resist eviction.

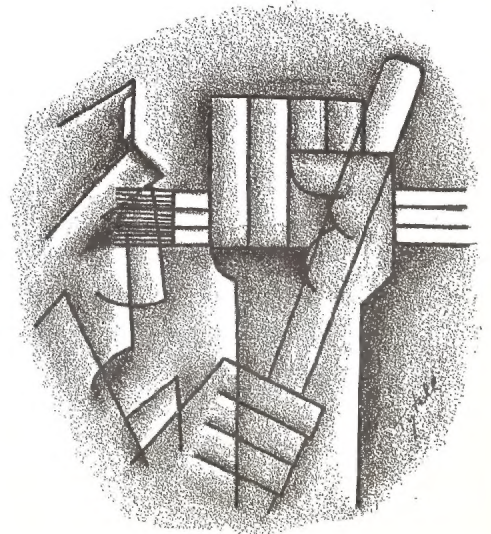
The police piled into this solid mass, smashing clubs across faces, and other

parts of the body, separating individuals from the group, and escorting them forcibly to the elevator. Much help was given to this constant procession through the medium of clubs, and by the frequent use of fists. Railings were ripped away by W.P.A. guards and police, furniture was wrecked, to provide the police with a better battle ground. Englehorn stood off to one side, pointing out leaders of the delegation, especially Paul Block, who was subjected to a most brutal beating, slammed across the head with a club, dragged across the floor, stepped on, and thrown bleeding into the elevator.

Such well known artists as Philip Evergood, Helen West Heller, 60 year old mural painter, and Philip Reisman, were brutally beaten.

THE floor was finally cleared two hours later. Two hundred and nineteen artists were arrested, the largest mass arrest on record. They were piled into patrol wagons, and arraigned in night court on charges of disorderly conduct. Congressman Marcantonio assumed the defense along with attorneys from the International Labor Defense, Civil Liberties Union and the City Projects Council.

Two hundred and nineteen artists were brutally beaten and arrested. Newspaper headlines sent Mayor LaGuardia, one eye cocked on labor support next year, scurrying to Washington to protest W.P.A. cuts. Commissioner Valentine issued orders that police would not interfere with "sit down" strikes, in buildings, piers, etc. A week later, a very benign magistrate, Henry H. Curran, member of the reactionary National Economy League, coupled a hypocritical 'Merry Christmas' with a verdict of 'guilty' and a suspended sentence. The Artists Union is calling for an exhibition



Tytell

of the work of the 219 arrested.

It would seem from the ensuing actions that W.P.A. workers have learned to beware of the paternalism of a La Guardia. Overnight "sit-down" strikes in rapid succession, on the part of writers, theatre workers and dancers,—have dealt sharp, swift blows at the treacherous curtailment program of the administration.

That Washington is already looking toward retreat, is demonstrated by the

announcement that only non-relief workers would be laid off. This is a decided retreat from the original intention to curtail quotas with no regard for the need of those laid off. However, art workers are accepting no layoffs. The fight for reinstatement of those fired so far, goes on.

On December 9th, 2,500 cultural workers, working on the arts projects, walked out in a half day stoppage, to protest dis-

missals. On the 12th, arts workers joined a picket line of 5,000 around the central W.P.A. office.

Cultural workers are learning that their problems, as isolated as they might seem to be, cannot be divorced from the major struggles of the unemployed and other W.P.A. workers. The orientation towards common struggle with the manual and other white collar workers is a healthy sign.

THE ARTIST BEGINS TO FIGHT!

By Boris Gorelick

Organizer of the N. Y. Artists Union

Speech delivered at a meeting of workers on the five Arts Projects united in the City Projects Council. Meeting held November 30 at Washington Irving High School.

I SPEAK tonight on behalf of an organization that for a long time has been an important factor in crystallizing organization and union consciousness amongst wide sections of cultural, white collar and professional workers. On behalf of the Artists Union, I wish at the outset to extend greetings and a pledge of support to this splendid meeting which expresses the organized indignation and resentment of W.P.A. workers against the proposed plans of the administration to curtail and taper off W.P.A.

We stand today on the threshold of a most critical period, without question the most serious that has ever confronted W.P.A. people. For, already today we have reports from all sections of the country substantiating our analysis that this will be the most sweeping attempt by the administration to undermine the whole structure of governmental support and responsibility to the unemployed. For the cultural workers this means the end of their projects.

Because we realize the implications of this new onslaught against us we come prepared to participate in the formulation of a broad, comprehensive and unified program of action—the framework of which must be constructed tonight. This is not the first time we find ourselves on the defensive, the victims of an unscrupulous attack. Let us recall that only a short while ago we were faced with a predicament similar in many aspects to our present one, from which we can draw certain comparisons and conclusions. Similar not merely by virtue of the fact that superficially it appears the same, in-

volving the question of dismissals and layoffs, but for a deeper reason. Today, just as then, the policy and tactics of the administration are determined by the same insidious, reactionary groups which always fought bitterly any government backing of cultural projects and activities.

We must admit, however, that although the objectives and consequences remain identical—the tactics and general line of the administration are altered to suit the new circumstances and are raised to a higher and more subtle plane. Whereas in March and April the strategy was to attack with force, violence and ugly slander for the purpose of perverting public sentiment and justifying retrenchments—today the tactics follow a different line. Whereas in the past we were called chisellers, boondogglers, hobohemians and other vile epithets—today public opinion is being systematically groomed to accept the liquidation of W.P.A. on the basis of a vicious bedtime story; that prosperity is here—that unemployment and the depression are phenomena of the past—that private industry has absorbed or is on the point of completing absorption of all unemployed—that happy days are here again—that W.P.A. and Relief are an unnecessary extravagance and hangover of a pre-prosperity era. These unprincipled and unfounded lies are meant to serve as the ideological foundation for curtailment. Thus it follows that a new terminology is substituted for the old. The chisellers and boondogglers have become inefficient, non-competents, non-essentials and even psychopaths. But the reality underlying these shallow expedients appears in the following statement by Mr. Englehorn, co-ordinator of the Five Arts Projects in New York:

"The results of W.P.A. need survey are immaterial to the basis for layoffs as far as relief personnel is concerned. Layoffs are on the basis of reduction of

personnel. If we cannot meet our new quotas through cutting non-relief personnel we will cut relief workers. If the reduction destroys the essential character of the Art Project and the project then cannot substantiate its existence, the project will warrant its being disbanded." This is merely a continuation of the general policy of attacking every progressive tendency and institution in American life.

ALTHOUGH decisively defeated and overwhelmingly rejected by the people of the United States at the polls less than a month ago, it seems that reactionaries are more firmly rooted in our governmental policy and administrative setup than ever before. The administration is piping the same tune of extravagance, economy, balancing of budget that was composed by the Republican Liberty League combinations.

This is a betrayal of the mandate of the people given to President Roosevelt. It reflects on the integrity of individuals in high office. We would like to know who has slipped into the White House through the back door after being thrown out at the front?

The situation is clear and our conclusions must be as clear and decisive. We cannot accept any governmental decree that means the destruction of our homes and families. We cannot accept the lying propaganda that prosperity is back and unemployment is solved. For us there is no prosperity—and unemployment is still as real and still as acute as ever. We cannot accept the alternative given us by Mr. Englehorn that if jobs for artists are not available we should get to work digging ditches. We say that this contemptuous and callous attitude is a flagrant and criminal violation of the people's mandate. We say that we are going to resist any and every effort made by

the government to take our jobs. We say that our resistance will take on such a character as to smash any efforts to institute dismissals regardless of pretext.

The value and essentiality of our projects have been proven. These projects cannot be curtailed. On the contrary they must become a permanent feature of our social and national life. From now on we are on the offensive. Our defensive is vigorous counter attack. We must intensify our activities, force the rescinding of dismissals and pink slips, the reinstatement of all fired workers, the expansion of all projects to include the millions still unemployed by the Chamber of Commerce.

The question arises: can we expect to be successful in our struggle? Basing our conclusions on past experiences, we

confidently say—Yes, we can be successful! We defeated dismissals in Ridder's time—we can do it again! The struggle against dismissals has already begun on the Art Projects. The Supervisors Council has refused to submit lists for firing. We must back this stand and use it as a beginning for an offensive of the widest and most determined nature. We must have concerted and vigorous action on the basic issue before us—the issue of dismissals.

At this time, on behalf of the Artists Union, I propose such action and urge upon this meeting the adoption of a most vigorous program—a program that will dramatize our opposition to dismissals and pink slips and leave no doubt as to our determination to fight this issue to a successful end.

necessarily a vulgar taste, and that the regimentation of an industrial society cannot ever produce arts worthy to be supported. Both charges seem to me to be libels on contemporary American taste and contemporary American creation. In all the arts, as any informed observer knows, there is work being done that by its own beauty and freshness justly cries for support.

It is not the artist as a person who is our concern. We are not pleading for the artist on humanitarian grounds. We are making a plea rather for the importance of the work he is doing in the society in which he lives.

THERE is increasing evidence that with the spread of education in all the arts, taste and enthusiasm are growing widespread, fastidious and disciplined. The artist needs two kinds of support: he needs to live well enough and comfortably enough to do the work of his special talents, and he needs an audience by which his imagination and his ardor are sustained. Walt Whitman said truly, "Great poets need great audiences, too." There are beginning to be such audiences in America. The highbrow and the snob have been surprised by the widespread public support and enthusiasm for the arts as evidenced by the interest in the mural exhibitions of the Federal Arts projects, the concerts provided by the Federal Music Projects (who would ever have thought that Bach would be a best seller in New York!), and by the phenomenal success of the Federal Theatre Projects all over the country.

It might be suggested that if there is such interest in the arts why can they not be supported commercially? But the fact remains that the commercial theatres, the commercial galleries and the commercial concerts will not undertake precisely that encouragement of the new and the experimental which is almost the beginning and the hope of any future for art. Art for profit, like anything else for profit, demands standardization and mass production; standardization and mass production are the very enemies of art itself. It may be said the governmental support of the fine arts also will lead to regimentation, but the opposite has been the fact. Public support of artistic activities is not a new thing in the world. It was practised by Czarist Russia, by imperial Germany, and by democratic France. Surely, in our democracy, which is beginning to develop traditions expressive of our own land, the public support and encouragement of the arts are a subsidy of those things which are life at its most free and complete. What else is democracy for?

ART IN A DEMOCRACY

By Irwin Edman

Professor of Philosophy, Columbia University

From a speech delivered at a symposium held at the Daly Theatre on November 22, 1936, under the auspices of the Artists Union and the Artists Congress. The symposium was to be the first of a series of about twenty entitled "Shall the Artist Survive?" Originally arranged by

the Federal Art Project, the presentation of the series was deliberately sabotaged by the administration, which refused on the first occasion to accept responsibility for its own work and then ordered the discontinuance of the entire project.

THE situation of the artists in our era is tragically precarious. The arts were for centuries the pet and special diversion of a leisured patron class. The absence of general education made widespread interest in and support of the arts impossible, with some notable exceptions in the way of medieval churches. In the Renaissance and in the 17th and 18th centuries, music, painting and literature owed a great part of their life to great patrons. It must not be forgotten how much of the monuments of English literature, French painting and of German music were paid for by wealthy connoisseurs. We think of Bach and Beethoven as composers of eternal things, as indeed they were, but one needs only to be reminded how some of Beethoven's best quartets were written for a Russian count, and Bach's concertos for a prince.

The patron tradition continued in the plastic arts in the 19th century, though the printing press and popular education made it less necessary and much less present in literature. But within the last cen-

tury, patrons have, on the whole, turned from the support of living artists to the collection, at fabulous prices, of the works of the great and expensive dead. The connoisseur has ceased, with some honorable exceptions, to be the endower of a living art, and has become the collector of museum pieces of the past.

The art of the great dead is of course an imperishable possession, but a living art is the only possible expression of the contemporary generation. Where is the living artist to look for support, and how is he to survive? The traditional patron has ceased to exist, and even if he did, the atmosphere of personal patronage is hardly consonant with the general temper of our society. If the arts are to express and nourish the spiritual needs, the interests and the joys of our times, support must come from the miscellaneous and unopulent many who have taken the place, as an audience, of the opulent few. It is argued by the discouraged that the arts cannot survive in our society, that the taste of the many is

Painting and Reality

By LOUIS ARAGON

Extracts from a discussion held at the "Maison de la Culture," Paris, May, 1936. Appearing in book form in the "Collection Commune" (Editions Sociétés Internationales, Paris). Translation by James Johnson Sweeney, reprinted by courtesy of "Transition."

It is always at those moments when social equilibrium is at the breaking-point, when the dominant class no longer has anything but the trappings of authority, and the real strength lies in a class in the ascendant which the masters of society strive to disguise, that the realist tendency in the art and literature of class-societies makes its appearance. This is a fact which memories of the period prior to 1789 and of Diderot's campaign on behalf of realism, as well as those years just before the Commune when Manet, Flaubert, Zola and Courbet represented art, renders clear, patent and unquestionable to the majority of us. Bearing in mind that these thrusts of realism correspond to the historic rise of the bourgeois class in the first instance and of the proletariat in the second, I want to see in the fact that, whether one likes it or not, in art and in literature, the cardinal problem—the open wound—that which stirs the tempest on all sides, in short, the only issue over which, in these days of the Popular Front, one can bring the artists of the period ardently to grips, as this evening, in the case of both writers and painters, is the question of realism. I want to see in this fact the symbol, the prophecy, the herald of the victory of those social forces which combined against the "two hundred families." Perhaps I displease you by drawing on the news of the day for my figures of speech, but it can't be helped.

Where, today, do we see the antithesis of realism more clearly than in the expression of Charles Maurras, who dubs that handful of troublemakers who are linked with the merchants of munitions, the "real country." The great triumph of the National Front organized on Joan of Arc's day, was an example of an unreal stage-setting trying to cover up the real forces of the country through the trick of a parade. Who are those who fear realism in the cinema? Who placed a ban on "La Vie est à Nous" and "La Révolte des Pêcheurs?" Who arranged to have views of the lily-of-the-valley

vendors shown on the screen to symbolize May Day in Paris? I could be carried away by examples: I must limit myself to a discussion of painting. Yes, it is true that at the present time the masters of this art, which has been the pride and honor of our country for centuries and especially during the last hundred years — men whose ideas, no doubt, were formed in a different period — are on the whole hostile to realism, in fact they do not even want to hear it discussed. This is so true that André Derain, who had, at first, promised to be present here, declined to participate at the last moment in our debate which he considered futile and even sinister. Yet, in his own painting, since his *Chevalier X* which is in the Museum of Western Art in Moscow, even down to the portraits which he paints today, what steps have been taken in the direction of realism? From what, then—not only with Derain but with the best of our painters—does this distrust of realism derive, this flight from reality which modern exhibitions so strikingly illustrate? We must go back some distance in our consideration of the matter.

In my brochure "La Peinture au Défi" which appeared six years ago—today all of it does not seem to me of equal worth, but in the main it is still in keeping with my present opinion—I attempted to show that painting, during a certain epoch, found itself confronted with a challenge, the challenge of photography. It goes without saying that this was more apparent than real and that no battle ever took place between these two allegorical monsters, the one armed with a palette and the other with its head hooded in a black cloth. Beneath this challenge we should look for the economic forces at work, we should bind this challenge to history. Yet, it is certain that the initial argument which induced painters to abandon the imitation of nature—the primary form of realism—lay in the uselessness of attempting to rival the camera. My statement is perhaps too broad, for it is equally true that the beginnings of photography did, at the outset, stimulate the realism of such a man as Courbet, for example. Then came a period when the naturalistic painter wanted to paint more realistically than the photographer, by painting that which eluded draughtsmanship and the art of black and white. Impressionism

is the last stage of this rivalry. Suddenly, the painters grow desperate, break off short right there and seek their road in quite another direction. With Braque and Picasso they even reached the point of wishing no longer to imitate nature but rather to compete with it. We have the frequently quoted "mot" of Georges Braque, who wondered whether or not one of his still-lives would hold its own if set down in a field of wheat.

HOWEVER, in studying this metamorphosis of modern painting, it seems to me that in general the despair caused painters by photography has been too often taken lightly. In fact, I think that in order to study what is taking place in the field of painting, it would be necessary to glance over the evolution of photography and the whole question would be clarified. There still appears, only too frequently, the tendency to believe that the intrinsic elements of painting are explicable by themselves, and by themselves alone, and that painting constitutes a world that is closed and even unintelligible to him who is not a painter. This particularism, which is opposed to the research of general laws applicable to all the arts, is found with all its obscure resistances among the inhabitants of the Republic of San Marino who assert that there is a San Marino situation which has nothing in common with the rest of humanity and who, if we had invited them to a debate this evening on "Realism and San Marino" would have been of the opinion, no doubt, that such activities are useless, even sinister. For my part, I am unable to believe that painting can have an evolution contradictory to that of other creative activities of men and, for example, that instead of contributing to the widening of human knowledge it tends to return purely and simply to magical conjurations. I will speak, therefore, of photography.

In its infancy, photography, with its technical imperfections, had at first regarded painting as an ideal far beyond it, which it sought to approach. It imitated the picture to such an extent that the camera portrait was often made in a frame, as may be seen in the Dallamagne photographs from the Nadar collection, reproduced in a recent book ("La Photographie en France au XIX^e Siècle" by Gisèle Freund), a book which is of con-



THE YACHTSMEN

PHILIP EVERGOOD

siderable importance because of its contributions to the history of art and on which I shall, this evening, rely for testimony on more points than one.

During this period, the pose is too long and difficult, the apparatus heavy and cumbersome. The photograph is essentially a studio photograph. All these factors, particularly in the case of the portrait, condition the stiff, studied, academic attitudes imitated from paintings. These first photographs play an important role in discrediting the pictorial clichés which up to that time were accorded a certain respect. The contempt in which the photo is held by the artists leads them to react against that which is hackneyed in their own arrangements. Later on, they seek to substitute for the attitudes of romantic figures simple, everyday attitudes. Hence it is not the photograph which points the way to realism, but painting itself. The snapshot which we came to know later was, at that time, not feasible. It did not precede, it followed pictures like the celebrated: "Bonjour Monsieur Courbet!"

Painting, fleeing from photographic competition, also led the way out of the studio, into the open air with the Impressionists. Romantic art had been the accomplishment of men who had meditated on the paintings of their predecessors. Delacroix, contemptuous of photography, was in reality photographing pictorial subjects taken, not from nature but from the painters of the Renaissance. The curves of his figures are most frequently

the mental copies of a Michelangelo or a Benozzo Gozzoli. The realists of the Second Empire break with this painting which drew its deepest inspiration from painting and not from life. And in this way they point the road to the photographers. One might say that the entire history of photography is that of its technical advances. But these advances, since the day of the daguerreotype, have resulted, on the photographer's part, in a series of conceptions of his art culminating, as it seems to me, in the very important work published in 1934 by the American photographer, Man Ray. This represents the work of fourteen years. From 1920 to 1934, from photos which might be simple magazine illustrations to these black and white rayograms taken by direct impression on the plate without a camera, Man Ray embodies to perfection the classical in photography. It is now no longer in the pose or composition of photography that he imitates the picture or painting: Man Ray is not a contemporary of Ingres, but Picasso. His photograph, with striking virtuosity, succeeds in reproducing the very *manner* of modern painters, that element, in them, which more than any other, it seems, should challenge the objective and mechanical. Even the impasto—even the very touch of the painter—we find it all here. And all the painters as well: Manet, Seurat, the extreme point of *pointillisme*, Picasso. Here the camera goes so far as to lean on them, not only for material but for pattern also. With Man Ray, the photo-

graph thus becomes a sort of new criticism of painting which stops at nothing, not even surrealism. But at the same time its researches are tainted with the same sterility which had formerly affected painting; this photograph is detached from life, its subject-matter is the art which preceded it. One completely unfamiliar with the painters alluded to would not be able to appraise fully these results. More than ever photography, in the case of Man Ray, its master in the postwar period, is a studio art, with all the term implies: the eminently static character of the photograph. An art which corresponds fully to the social balance of the period, when the Treaty of Versailles was not yet entirely shattered and when "prosperity" allowed the experimenter a relative tranquility, reflected in beautiful human faces that are without defect and without misery.

However, in photograph, there had existed for a long while another current. At the beginning of the century, family albums were full of snapshots which were generally scorned, or scarcely taken seriously, and in fact regarded as much further from art than the posed photograph. The taste of our middle-class tended toward more elaborate photographs, and one should read Mlle. Gisèle Freund, apropos of the retouched photograph which she discusses in the book I have already mentioned. For the retouched photograph, which makes for uniform prettiness and idealizes everything, is the class characteristic of the type of photography demanded by the reigning middle class. In this special domain it constitutes the mystification, the weapon against realism. "How awful," said our aunts or cousins, when they saw a snapshot which had caught them just as they were. And undoubtedly they were right. Horrors were there which they would have preferred no one should disclose.

BUT before a real knowledge of what the snapshot was revealing, from the human and social standpoint, could achieve a wide contemporary recognition, the advent of the moving picture was necessary. The cinema seizes millions of fleeting, impermanent aspects of the world around us. It has taught us more about man in a few years than centuries of painting have taught: fugitive expressions, attitudes scarcely credible yet real, charm and hideousness. What revelations concerning our own movements, for example, do we not owe to the slow-motion picture? What did we understand of human exertion before the slow-motion picture, what of the expressions resultant from abominable suffering? And so on.

How much of all that is to be found in classical photography up to and including Man Ray? Exactly nothing. We must look to the most recent times to find, finally among the younger photographers, a sort of renewal of their art, which has certainly for its basis the appearance of new types of cameras. In the last few years, the manufacture of cameras, such as those of the newspaper photographers, the principle of which is very similar to that of cinema cameras, has developed a definitely new school of photography, which has nothing concerted about it, but of which certain features may be found in the work of numerous artists. It has so happened that, thanks to the technical perfection of the camera, photography, in its turn, has abandoned the studio and lost its static, academic character—its fixity. It has mixed into life; it has gone everywhere taking life by surprise: and once again it has become more revealing and more denunciatory than painting. It no longer shows us human beings posing, but men in movement. It arrests moments of their movements that no one would have ventured to imagine or presumed to see. For a long while, through a desire for simplicity, the painter had reached the point where he allowed his model only the most common, elementary, natural gestures. He would have recoiled before the too infrequent excesses of this or that human attitude. The photograph, on the other hand, today stops at nothing. It is discovering the world anew.

Here I am led into a parenthesis. The strange part of this re-discovery is that, suddenly, when timid painting has long since renounced daring compositional arrangements, photography reduces at random, in the streets or anywhere, the earliest audacities of painters. We are in a period analogous to that in which painters, for the first time, after abandoning the art of the ikon, which was the earliest stages of our painting tradition, the Byzantine style carried on through Cimabue, dared to set on canvas or in fresco human heaps in which arms, masked faces and pikes cut haphazard across the picture without any regard for the individual form. Today the crowds are returning to art through the photograph—with the excited gestures of children at play, with the attitudes of a man surprised in his sleep, with the unconscious habit gestures of the *flâneur*, with the heteroclitie diversities of human beings as they follow one another along the streets of our modern cities. And here I have especially in mind the photographs of my friend Cartier.* It is not merely by chance, either, that some of his most interesting pictures were made in Mexico and Spain.

* Henri Cartier-Bresson.

For what I mean is, that this art, which is opposed to that of the relatively peaceful after-war period, truly belongs to this period of wars and revolutions we are in now, by the fact of its accelerated rhythm. I find it extremely symptomatic that the photographic anthology of Man Ray bears the date of 1934. It would lose its significance had it been extended beyond the 6th of February of that year. The advances in photographic technique are parallel to the social events which condition them, and render them necessary. It is the camera which the reporter used during those February days, which he had to use for days like that, that teaches a lesson about the contemporary world which ought to open the eyes of all, and why not the eyes of the painter?

Painters have had various attitudes towards photography. At first scorn, then emulation, then panic. They have seen in the photographic apparatus a rival—they have looked at it as the laborer of the nineteenth century looked at the machine. They have held it responsible for all their misfortunes. They have tried not to do what it does. That was their great idea. This misunderstanding of a human acquisition, of a device for broadening the field of knowledge was bound, quite naturally, to force them in the direction of a denial of knowledge. In other words, towards a reactionary attitude. In proportion to their talent, even the greatest of the painters became absolute ignoramuses. They sought to make their paintings represent and signify less and less. They drowned themselves in the delectation of mannerism and material, they lost themselves in abstraction. Nothing human remained on their canvases and they were content to become the demonstrators of the technical problems of painting. They ceased painting for men, and no longer painted for anyone but painters. Add to this, and here I speak of the best, that the easy financial circumstances resulting from the speculations of the period we were in, by furnishing a relatively comfortable livelihood for the masters of painting, swept them each day further along in this direction. They lost sight of life because, like grown-up children, they lived on their rich parents, the picture dealers. The awakening has been rude.

The social conditions which had permitted this curious evolution, this flight from reality toward magic ceremonies and all that game of echos from the past history of art which goes by the name of the Paris School—these conditions exist no longer today. Yet the painters, among whom an uneasiness is evident, are nevertheless very slow to revise their ideas—ideas they have held all their lives. They

are not far, if I may insist on speaking of photography, from repeating that photography is their enemy, and from demanding that kodaks be smashed as vulgar mechanisms. They have not understood that the photographic experience is a human experience which they cannot neglect, and that the new realism which will come, whether they wish it or not, will see in photography not an enemy, but an auxiliary of painting. It is just this which men like Max Ernst and John Heartfield, in the pictorial advance-guard, sensed vaguely when they tried, in various ways, to incorporate the photograph into the picture. But this was only a transitional phase. The photograph teaches us to see—it sees what the eye fails to discern. In the future it will not be the model for the painter in the old sense of academic models, but his documentary aid in the same sense in which, in our day, files of daily newspapers are indispensable to the novelist. And would anyone say that the newspaper, or reporting, for example, is in competition with the novel? This is the sort of nonsense which is put forward when photography and painting are contrasted. I will assert that the painting of tomorrow will use the photographic eye as it has used the human eye.

I should like to announce here a new realism in painting. That is to say, I do not in any way imagine a return to an



PENSIONED

MAX WEBER

Artists Congress Show
Courtesy Guild Art Gallery

old realism. Painting cannot have passed unaffected through the experiences of the last seventy years. From these experiences it will certainly retain the essentials. It is not for me, but for the painters, to determine what these essentials are. What I can tell them, however, is that it will turn the arms which they have forged to uses which the painters never dreamed of at the time. In 1930 I wrote in "Peinture au Défi":

"One can imagine a time when the problems of painting and, for example, those which have made for the success of Cézannism, will seem as antiquated as the prosodic worries of the poets of other days seem now."

This time has not come for everyone, but already there are plenty of painters for whom in six years that point has been reached. Recently Goerg said to me that it was astonishing to think that one could line up the works of a painter produced during the last few years, and not find a difference among those which preceded and those which followed the 6th of February, 1934. Coming from Goerg, to whom it does credit, this declaration is worth dwelling upon, and for myself I consider it exemplary. It clarifies what this new realism can be, what it may be.

THE realists of the Second Empire were vulgar realists, still there were among them great painters, such as Courbet. Their realism is only naturalism. Nature is their master. It is the goal that art attempts to achieve. The role of art was to copy nature. The realists of the days of the Popular Front would not know how to be naturalists. Nature is not by any means the supreme good for them, nor the supreme beauty. They are men of a period in which men have undertaken to transform nature. That is to say, that nature only furnishes them the elements of their art, but they paint in order that these elements may become profitable to man, for the harmonious evolution of man, the master of nature. For the naturalistic illusion, that source of naturalism which derives from Rousseau, of Geneva, they will substitute reality. Human expression in painting will no longer be dictated, for these painters, by the forces of nature—it will be the product of human forces, it will interpret consciously, and not by the circumlocutions of former times, men who are no longer mere details of the landscape, nor exist independently one of the other, but whose positions are determined through the social relationship of one with the other. This realism will cease to be a realism dominated by nature—a naturalism—and become a realism, which is a conscious expression of social realities, an integral

element in the combat which will eventually alter these realities. In a word, it will either be a socialistic realism or painting will cease to exist, that is, will cease to exist on a level of dignity. It is a great role, gentlemen, which falls to you, and I have only one fear: that there may be among you some very considerable artists whom the fear of taking up a contrary attitude to that to which they have held, and the dread of being left unworthy of such a high destiny, is sweeping them to a failure to recognize what would truly make for future greatness.

No more than the writers can you painters remain mere entertainers; no more than they will merely humor the ear in the future will you flatter the eye. Believe me, the moment has come for you to speak out like men. You will no longer decorate the palaces of the mighty with anodyne arabesques. You will be working with other men as their equals in the world which is coming, do not forget it. They are looking to you for inventions that are as fine as the wireless. If, as a celebrated saying has it, it is the role of the writers to be the *engineers of the soul*, do you believe that your destiny ought to be less? You painters are going to build the new world. That certainly is worth a revision of your ideas.

(In the following section Aragon answers and exhorts the critics of his speech.)

TO speak differently from the rest of the world—that is aristocracy." This is the aphorism of a painter named Gustave Courbet, one who was not in the least afraid to give his opinion on literature and poetry. Like him, I am not at all afraid, either, in spite of the anonymous letters which I have received since our last meeting, to state, as a writer, my ideas on painting.

We are now celebrating the anniversary of the Commune, which was the first government to put a painter, and a great painter, at the head of painting. Many of you, the other day, marched by the *Mur des Federes*, carrying the portrait of Gustave Courbet. He was a man whose words had the flavor and force of sacrilege. In his time he broke away from the accepted ideas of painting as from those of sociology. He did not like Raphael and perhaps you would have drowned his voice with cat-calls when he said of the "Madonna of the Chair":

"That's a good joke! Raphaels—in the network of our suburbs, there are at least twenty poor fellows who produce Raphaels day after day, and neither popes

nor kings dream of giving them crowns or even bread."

In his character of infuriated realist, he used to say of an allegorical statue of youth:

"Youth! Is there a woman alive capable of representing youth? And then the young person you show us is entirely naked. Is that real? Must we make a dress for her? Where is her dress?"

You hooted at me the other day—and with considerable warmth—because I mixed the influences of February, 1934, into a discussion of painting. But it was written of Courbet while he was still alive:



POSTER

"No one is ignorant of the fact that it is he who, on the morrow of the 24th of February, gave the signal for realism in art."

For the Revolution of 1848 was the signal for realism and Courbet was its standard-bearer. It is displeasing to you today that the great social upheavals disturb the pattern of your chimeras, the sluggishness of your pictorial meditations. What can I do about it? That's how things are. And your evident resentment proves that the question of realism is a live issue. Your voices will not succeed in hushing it up.

As early as 1849, Courbet wrote:

"Yes, it is necessary to pull art down from its pedestal. Too long now the painters, our contemporaries, have been producing an art based on ideal concepts, from cartoons."

And later:

"Why should I try to see in the world what is not there, and to disfigure what is there by efforts of the imagination?"

We are in a period when painters as a group speak a language quite foreign to ours and, under a mystical, professional confusion, disguise an art based on purely mental concepts, the art made after cartoons, stigmatized by Courbet in those first days of the Second Empire. Never with more violence, with more clarity or with greater brilliance than in this new age of balladry, over which the memory of Jean-Baptiste Clement hovers, when we can believe that the springtime of the race had returned, has the relationship between art and the social movement been so apparent to all, everywhere. You painters who were the persecuted of the pre-war period—you fauves and cubists whose execrated pictures were the distress of mothers and the dream of boys, you who at that time re-created the world—have passed thirty years curled up comfortably on your treasure, on your discoveries. Nowadays Derain and Braque refuse orders from the Government; the museums are full of your butterfly wings. What danger do you run and where is your importance? About 1920 I heard those whom the desire for tranquility spurred on, become indignant over the criticisms which the Dadaists brought against the work of their immediate predecessors. "To the stake! Back to Zurich!" was the cry against Tristan Tzara, of those of you who had already found buyers among your traducers of the day before yesterday. From 1920 to 1936 this state of mind became even more widespread and increasingly popular.

But is there in the world which surrounds you anything whatsoever that legitimizes this singular conversatism in you? Of painting—whatever you may believe—I think just as I do of poetry, that it is a great and sacred thing, that it is worth living for and dying for, as all the superior forms of expression, which are the goal of our life, are worth living and dying for. And now, see what they have done with painting, the masters of this world on whom you have strangely depended during these last years—involuntary playthings of a skittish and incomprehensible stock-market which has sent the canvases of Matisse and Picasso from a few sous to a few millions, toys of those same men who allowed Seurat, Van Gogh and Modigliani to die in misery only to deck themselves afterwards in the

brilliant plumage left behind. They have made of your painting a type of merchandise which gains value in their hands and not at all in yours; they have muddled all values in their unconscionable speculative competition, tossing out from the market of Europe to the American market priceless examples of form and color, together with the most incredible pot-boilers. Your pictures became the cards in this baccarat of the period of prosperity. And when the black and uncertain days of the depression arrived, your patrons discarded you, as stable-owners might worn-out horses. These are the same people who burn coffee and wheat and throw milk into the sea. And in that is certainly more than a mere figure of speech. For painting and art in general are as essential to man as the necessities of life for which the workers are on strike this evening in the Renault factory, for which people are fighting and dying throughout the whole world. The man who lives by his labor, and who in no way exploits his fellow-man, wants painters and wants them to paint, just as he wants vagabond clouds in his sky. Just as he wants to have a fortnight holiday with pay once a year in order to give his dreams a free rein. So your fight is only part of the common fight.

That is why this evening's gathering has an importance that extends beyond the four walls of this hall, because of its relationship to the epic struggle of those who have nothing but eyes to see with and bodies with which to love, against your common masters, your common exploiters—O incredulous painters, can you not see the unity of all our destinies. I wish to limit myself to these few words, to this simple appeal from a man like yourselves, from a man whose argument possibly does not interest you, or seems contrary to that which is dear to you, from a man who calls to you in the name of the realities of flesh and steel which surround us, that he is with you against the real enemy who takes down yesterday's works of art from the walls of the museums, sells them at public auction and burns them with books in the marketplace. Learn to recognize your true allies, men of little faith, learn to disentangle from your troubles not that which keeps us apart but that which unites us; and that is the reverse of a great saying: "My friends, your realm is of this world."

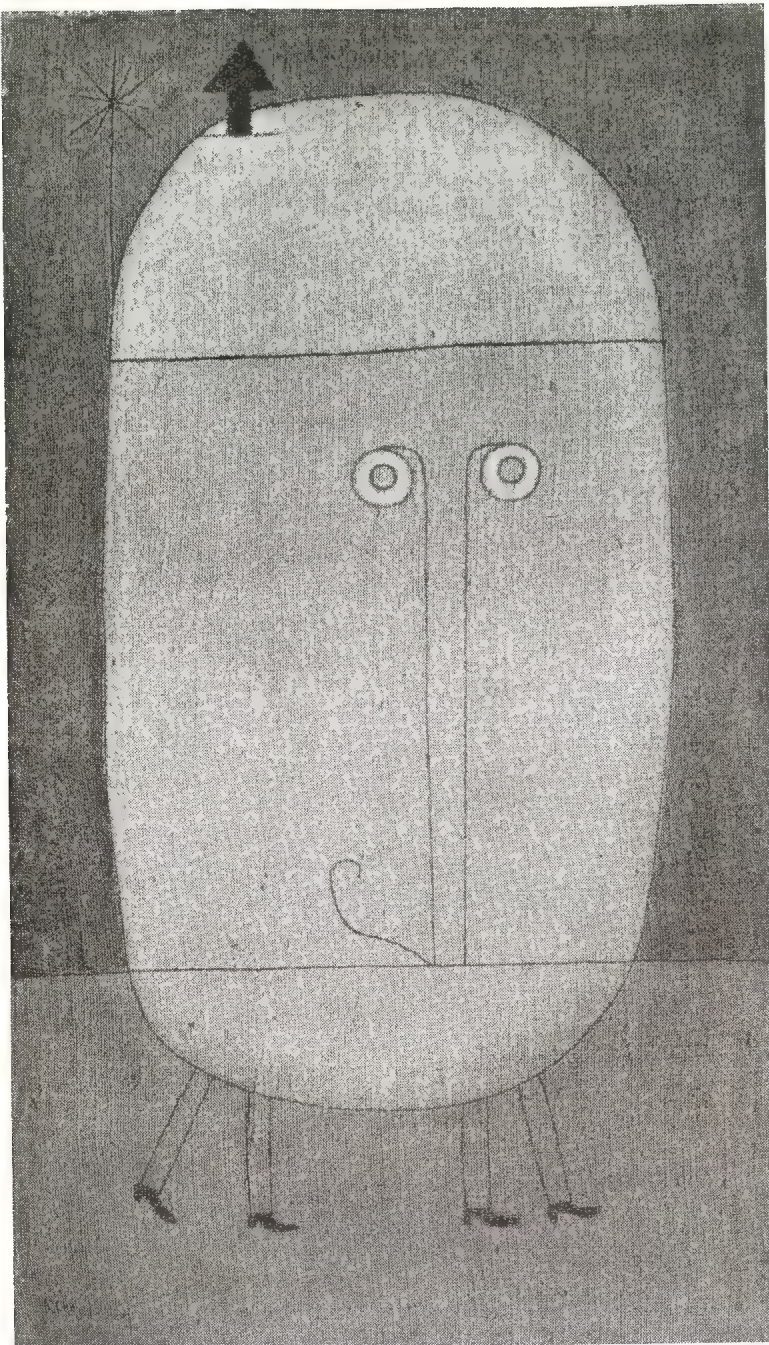
And that is why I make this appeal to you, contented or discontented as you may be, you who love life and know what light is. Turn your prism-eyes, and your hearts of poets, toward the triumphant reality, toward the real—flesh and substance of the art which is about to be born.



COOPERATIVE ARTISTS OF IOWA

THE SURREALISTS

By Charmion Van Wiegand



MASK OF FEAR

PAUL KLEE

*Courtesy Museum of
Modern Art*

branches—grotesque and erotic art—are inevitable manifestations where human energy is not reduced to the minimum of self preservation. Good as the present exhibition is, it is a sterilized version of fantasy, in which the extreme aberrations of the grotesque and particularly the erotic have been politely eliminated. But the addition of a section devoted to fantastic art in Europe since the end of the middle ages with examples of Bosch, Duerer, Hogarth, Blake, Goya and the belated romantics, despite many astonishing resemblances to surrealist images, only serves particularly in the early old masters to bring into sharp contrast the tremendous difference between the robust imagination of a growing society disengaging itself from medieval superstition and "the sickness of the world" which is surrealism self-styled.

It is impossible in small space even to review this enormous collection of "art" objects of all times and of varied esthetic worth from fur-covered cups, zipper-eyed suede maidens, bearded grapes, mathematical objects, rotating glass machines, bird-cages filled with sugar, collages of all sorts, architectural photographs, prints, paintings and sculpture. A serious omission is the lack of photomontage—in particular, the work of John Heartfield—the one phase of modern fantastic art which has received universal approbation and has been incorporated in our everyday existence.

Is it possible to rescue sense out of confusion and discover the meaning behind the surrealist efflorescence of fantasy in a hard-headed and rational age? The Cubists, we know, reduced the human body into separate parts, analyzing and dissecting it with surgical precision until they had destroyed its organic unity. The Surrealists seem to wish to perform the same task for the human mind. Their work coming after Cubism represents and reflects an even more acute crisis in the disintegration of the individual in capitalist society.

Three events in the beginning of this century hastened the death of the old order of society. They were the destruction of the concepts of the physical world with Einstein's discovery of the theory of relativity; the destruction of the moral concepts of our social life by Freud's theory of psychoanalysis; the destruction of existing political structures with the

THE present exhibition now on at the Museum of Modern art called Fantastic Art, Dada, and Surrealism arouses belated echoes of the post-war controversies which rocked the European art world more than a decade ago. The shell-shocked imagination of the continental artists exposed for over four years to the unendurable reality of destruction and war, the disintegration and social chaos which grew out of the bloody slaughter, revolted and found relief in a fantastic world where the usual logical and rational concepts ceased to be valid. If the explosive anarchism of Dadaism (born in 1916) intent upon wiping out existing notions of beauty and obliterating all individuality was mad, madder still was the world it reflected where millions of hu-

man beings were perishing and the whole cultural heritage of man was overthrown in the ruthless struggle for power.

The museum has arranged its exhibition in historical sequences and if you have the sardonic humor of Dada, you may see it with the eyes of the visitor, who termed it "just four floors of good clean fun." But if you are more seriously inclined, you may see in the astonishing potpourri of paintings, collages, sculpture and unesthetic objects in general, the heroic effort of man to adjust himself in a tragic dilemma, the need to find release from the unbearable confusion and contradictions inherent in a dying social order.

Fantastic art has always existed in all peoples and all societies. Its two great

social revolution in Russia. These dying paroxysms of capitalism mirrored in the field of the arts have caused the artist to frantically seek some solution to the death-dealing contradictions in society. Painting has faithfully transmuted these crises in the social and economic world into its own esthetic and formal terms. This fact explains why a great artist like Picasso has been unable to create a single unified style in painting and has passed through the whole historical development of western art in the course of twenty years. Such a see-saw of style change is not due to individual caprice but to a deep need to rescue some synthesis from the ever increasing confusion of our present existence.

AFTER Cubism, which destroyed the organic body, there appeared expressionism to destroy man's environment. Nothing was left now but the human ego struggling single-handed against chaos. Dadaism took the next logical step and robbed that ego of all intellectual concepts and rational action, reducing it to a babbling, insane entity, no longer able to formulate thought, but merely to express emotion and instinct on its primary levels. With the coming of the surrealists, a crisis was reached in the orgy of destruction. Preserving the illusion of the unity of the physical universe in its old mechanical concepts of time and space, the surrealists present their lurid formulas in a dead world, cold and empty. With Dali and Ernst and Tanguy the drama of disintegration reaches the stage of active corruption—ants eating the classic features of broken statues; murmurless and melting watches; panoramas of endless sea and space in which the lines never meet; dismembered limbs and hands observing each other in unorganic relationships; and framed vistas within vistas as the infinite identical image reflected in a double mirror.

With the Italian painter Chirico, the primitive of the surrealist movement, begins for the first time the phantasmagoria of the human mind in bourgeois society—nightmares of death and destruction through dismemberment and insanity. But Chirico still preserves the vision of the past; his tragic landscapes of twilight cities sleeping by the sea and wistful mechanical muses have the haunting music of a backward-looking romantic. In the canvas, *Melancholy and Mystery of a Street*, painted in the fateful years, 1914, the shadows are ominous with forboding of doom. *The Sailor's Barrack*, painted the same year, offers for the first time the surrealist repertoire of unrelated objects placed against a classic background. Perhaps its hypnotic

magic may be attributed to the suggestion of chaos impinging upon one familiar reality.

Picasso has also made his contribution to surrealism, but in his most fantastic creations, preserves a profound analysis of form which separates him esthetically from the official surrealists who deliberately debase painting to a chromo art or use it for the investigation of decomposing textures and academic illustration. Few surrealists proper are capable of the sensitivity of *Metamorphosis* or the magnificent monumental *Seated Woman* of 1927.

THREE exiles from the Expressionist camp have contributed vitally to the Surrealist movement and esthetically in some respects they overshadow it. They are Kandinsky with his abstract colored music; Grosz with his savage social satire; and Paul Klee with his ironic and exquisitely refined line. Certainly neither Hans Arp with his sensuous abstractions in various materials nor Miro with his lively inorganic microbes moving precisely across wide color spaces has the tremendous penetration of Klee, whose *Mask of Fear* compells attention by its primitive magic force united with the utmost civilized sophistication.

There is no space here to discuss the contribution of Marcel Duchamp, Picabia, Man Ray and other outstanding exponents of Surrealism. In many respects, the work of Max Ernst is the most im-

portant, his relation to Surrealism is on a par with Picasso's relation to Cubism. Coming out of Dadaism, Ernst incorporates in the body of his work all phases of surrealist development. Prolific in invention, he has a special ingenuity in the discovery of texture, particularly the textures of decomposition. In him one finds disconcerting and confusing contrasts ranging from debilitating chromo illustrations to plastic conceptions equal to Picasso. In this respect, Ernst probably most correctly mirrors the contradictions in the external world. His vision assumes an apocalyptic aspect in which objects no longer obey even the laws of dead time or space but move automatically in unreal relationships as occurs in the subjective drama of the unconscious or in our dream life.

Salvador Dali, the Catalan painter, now in the United States, has received the most public reclame for his paintings, but actually has added little to surrealist invention aside from the theory of the precise materialization of delirious images of concrete irrationality. He has dramatized in correct, academic perspective—the more concretely to realize horror—the obsessions and neuroses of society today—the sadism, the destructive egotism, the sexual perversions, the infantile regressions, the remnants of primitive magism, atavistic fossils from humanity's historic dawn.

Dali's painting pursues the same logical



HERE EVERYTHING IS FLOATING
Collage

MAX ERNST and HANS ARP
Courtesy Museum of Modern Art

course of regression common to insanity in the human individual. His writings on the paranoid obsessions are remarkably acute observations of logical deduction. Just as the logical structure of the mind often remains intact in the insane individual, providing him with a shrewd cold calculation alternating with fits of emotional instability and rage, so Dali displays acute intellectuality in the face of the most violent emotional aberrations. His work mirrors the festering sores of society, the murderous sadism, the pompous bombast, the cold violence which finds its physical outlets today in the methods of Fascist persecution and violence. A scientist of corruption, Dali deals in the "three great images of life—excrement, blood and putrefaction" and from them creates his pornographic postcards for an effete intelligentsia. With the introduction of photography in the 19th century, art and eroticism hitherto always united, went their separate ways. Cubism with its destruction of the body eliminated sex. Dali has reunited art and eroticism by a discovery which the photograph has not been able as yet to make use of—the pictorialization of Freudian symbolism. The contradiction between Dali's reactionary technique of miniature painting and his advanced psychology reveals the fundamental and ever-growing schism in society due to the vast discrepancy between its ideals and its behavior.

DALI declares that the purpose of his art is "to systemize confusion thanks to a paranoid and active process of thought and so assist in discrediting completely the world of reality." So far the artist may travel on the road to destruction but in the end he is faced with annihilation of art and life itself.

It is no accident that the Surrealists have surrendered to the revolution and proclaimed their allegiance to it—albeit in their own anarchist fashion. Intellectually, they make the step across the great divide between the death of an old culture and the birth of a new one. But emotionally they are enchanted with the art of corruption and with the swift rhythm of disintegration in a dead universe. Just as the allegiance to the old classic gods lived on for centuries under Christendom in the witch heresies, the black mass, the devil and the Walpurgis night, so the Christian myth from a time when religion was a progressive social force, now grown old and evil and corrupt, lives on in the Surrealists' devotion to the "marvelous" and "the blind and often ugly grandeur of miracles." In their "frantic and pathetic search for

Evil" they reveal all the reactionary tendencies of belated romantics.

But not all of Surrealism is merely decadent, not all of it corrupt with the festering sores of dying individualism faced with a future collective world. From its evil-smelling, putrifying fertilizer, new shoots of life may spring. Impressionism enriched our life with new color values, Cubism with new plastic innovations and Surrealism is contributing new discoveries of the inner life of

fantasy by pictorializing the destructive and creative processes of the subconscious mind. The art of the future, which will strive for a new humanism on a social basis will inevitably turn its face toward the world of reality again. In doing this, it will find uses for the technical inventions of the modern escapists, whether Cubist or Surrealist, just as Soviet society today is turning the scientific inventions of the bourgeois world to new collective uses for the benefit of every individual.

America Today-1937

By LYND WARD

IN the years since 1929, nothing has emerged with greater clarity than the position art occupies in the culture of capitalism. It is perfectly plain to us today that despite the protestations of capitalism's official apologists, despite the hesitant humanitarianism of some of its more liberal leaders, the chief value that fine art holds for society under capitalism is its capacity for being collected, for increasing in money value, for being the material of a vast speculative traffic. The work of the creative artist was secondary to this and important only as it contributed to it. Even when capitalist society was on the upgrade, for every dollar spent on living art, there were a hundred or more available for trading in the art products of past centuries. And when the

swing was no longer upward, but down, it became bitterly clear that if left to its own devices, if permitted to follow through the logic of its contradictions, the system that had so proudly professed to provide the greatest good for all the people as the inevitable result of profit-making, would be perfectly content to make this traffic in past art the sum total of its "artistic" activity, and let the living artist go to the scrap-heap along with other "unemployables."

But of course this tendency could not operate unopposed. Grudgingly and in spite of itself, capitalism had released a great deal of creative talent. True, it had by and large given only a bare subsistence living to this talent, but there was the opportunity for growth and artists took



AFTER THE HARVEST

Lithograph

CHET LA MORE

Artists Congress Show
Courtesy Guild Art Gallery

it. Growth had led to a general rejection of the standards of the capitalist world, and the erection of a scale of values in which aesthetic absolutes headed the list. This scale of values became a way of life for a large number of people, and when the contraction of the profit system presented them quite suddenly and brutally with the prospect of extinction, they simply wouldn't take it.

All this is by way of introduction to the outstanding graphic art exhibition of the year, and is made necessary because this exhibition has a significance over and above its importance as a group of prints individually capable of exciting the emotions of the human animal.

"America Today" is an exhibition of 100 prints by 100 American artists, and in it you will find examples of every graphic technique the modern artist commands—linoleum cut, wood cut, wood engraving, etching, dry-point, soft-ground, aquatint, mezzotint, copper engraving, lithographs in crayon, in wash and scraped down from a solidly-inked stone. You will find its subject matter ranging over the whole country and covering the waterfront—showing people in factories, on farms, in mines, on the slag-heaps, on carnival stages, boardwalks, city pavements, on docks, in the stoke-holds of ocean vessels, climbing mountains, fleeing dustrooms, dying in the South. You will find every aesthetic creed represented—from academic to abstract. You will find work by artists whose standing has been recognized for years—Blanch, Lozowick, Lankes, Biddle, Kent, Gag, Covarrubias, Cook, Kuniyoshi, Gottlieb—and by younger artists who are achieving recognition—Milius, Kubinyi, Lonergan and many more. You will find some prints you like very much (and it is on this peg that most of the "critical evaluations" of the show will be hung) and others that appeal to you less and which you will immediately feel are inferior work from a professional angle.

But when this has been said, what remains to be pointed out? Literally everything.

Above all things let us realize that this exhibition is an expression of the mind and the will of the American artist who would not accept the fate capitalist culture had in store for him.

In both its origin and in its goal, this exhibition marks a break with the past and becomes a very important part of that broad movement towards the future of which artists' unions, Federal Art Projects, committees on public use of art, and so on, are other manifestations.

The exhibition was conceived, organized, and carried out by an artists' organ-



AMERICA AND ITS PEOPLE

Woodcut

RALPH M. ROSENBERG

Artists Congress Show
Courtesy Guild Art Gallery

ization. It is true that we have had artists organized for the purpose of putting on shows before—the various societies of print-makers and so on, but "America Today" came out of an organization of a special kind—the American Artists' Congress—and the fact that the Congress exists to unite artists against war and fascism invests the origin of this show with a special significance. For it indicates that artists are conscious that a successful fight against those twin forms of destruction must be more than a conviction that they are evil. There must be an active building-up of the life of the future at the very moment that the old order spins ever closer to its end. This means that the artist must take the lead, as he does here, in expanding the world of art. That expansion is a basic need of society, but it is more completely and more poignantly the need of the artist. It is his job.

This exhibition is very definitely aimed at expansion, at reaching large number of people, at bringing art into the lives of persons who have been without it. To this end there are not one but thirty exhibitions, running in thirty cities simultaneously. Artists were encouraged to make their editions large or without limit and to put their prices low. Great time and energy were expended on publicising the show, so that awareness that it was going on would be widespread. A book of reproductions was published, making the 100 prints accessible to whoever can make economic contact with a book store.

Obviously, then, the intent and the

effect of "America Today" is to present a challenge to capitalist culture in no uncertain terms. It drives a wedge into the whole dark business of scarcity, speculation, prestige based on exclusiveness, and restrictive cultural patterns generally. It shows what power and potentialities exist in the American artist. It shows what can be done.

But we must not be blind to the challenge that this exhibition presents to the artist as well. If it demonstrates that he can for the first time in history assume a complete leadership in his field, it poses other questions that must be answered. The crux of the problem of expansion is the audience. Ample means for producing art of the most varied character and for producing it in almost unlimited quantity, are within our grasp. But we have got to have people on the consuming end. This is both an ideological and an economic problem. It is probably true that in the larger sense both aspects of the problem will ultimately be solved together. But pending that final moment of white-hot flux, there are definite responsibilities placed upon the artist. For years he has steeled himself to a subjective standard, developed a language whose powers of communication have been measured in terms of their effectiveness among artists. This has been, of course, a bulwark against an inimical world. Now he needs that world, to talk to it, to win it. Is he ready and willing to accept a more objective standard, to measure his product in terms of what it communicates

to laymen? This is a very precise question and one that cannot be ducked. In the present exhibition, for example, there is a print "It Can't Happen Here," for which an almost unanimous jury vote (all the jurors were artists) was registered. The print is a very brilliant abstract pattern, but one stemming from a social situation and a social conviction. I have tried it on several laymen and the

least negative of the reactions was one of puzzlement and confusion. In other words, the problem of expanding the world of art, of reaching new audiences requires new standards and new attitudes in artists. This is going to be harder and slower than any other aspect of his situation, and the degree to which we make new artists will be the measure of our progress in making a new world.

in the past tense, while actively attempting to carry out a viciously reactionary policy in relation to present-day production. It is important that we recognize, once and for all time, that the big reactionary business forces in America have deeply entrenched and well-guarded vested interest in the world of art and they have no intention of giving an inch without a serious battle. It is to their interest to keep art a very dead affair for the most part and to carefully control, by manipulation of their financial resources, all present-day production in safe channels.

CRISIS IN THE RENTAL ISSUE

By Chet La More

ONE year ago ART FRONT printed an article by Frederick Knight and Julian Levi, officers of the American Group, appealing for general adherence and support of the rental issue by the artists of America. The proposition, briefly restated, calls for the payment of rental fees for the use of contemporary works of art by all museums, colleges, art associations, groups and individuals having invited or jury exhibitions. The fee asked was fixed at 1 per cent per month of the price of the work with a \$1,000 maximum and a \$100 minimum. The original resolution to this effect was adopted by the American Society of Painters, Sculptors and Gravers and included a clause which made adherence to the principle a requirement for membership in that body.

We are not concerned here with the completely established, indisputable, and widely recognized justice of this demand that the artist be paid for the use of the work which he produces. Neither are we alarmed by the threats of the museums to discontinue the practice of exhibiting contemporary work if payment of rent is insisted upon. They did not begin this practice merely of their own volition nor will they end it simply by choosing to do so. We beg to remind these institutions of entrenched culture that they exist to a considerable extent by virtue of public funds and, to insure the continuance of these, they had best maintain those few weak ties they have with present day historical realities.

The justice of rentals is no longer a debatable matter. The growing list of institutions consenting is testimony to this as is the fact that the resolution calling for such payments has been indorsed by virtually every organization of artists in the country which is in any sense alive. We have it on good authority, although no official confirmation is available as yet, that a committee established by the Na-

tion Association of Museum Directors has admitted the validity of rentals and is only begging the question on the plea of insufficient sums. When this is official, agreement will be unanimous.

Are we to assume then that the opposition has vanished in the face of the successful boycott that has been maintained against it? Hardly. It is more determined than ever not to pay rent to the artists; it does not object to paying such fees to dealers, etc. A check on the list of institutions subscribing to the policy divulges the identity of our real opponents. With one or two exceptions, this list is made up of colleges, independent associations and three of the smaller municipal museums. It does not include those "great" institutions of culture which possess the largest historical collections and which have assiduously built themselves up in the minds of the American people as the body and blood of America's achievement in the plastic and graphic arts. Certainly it cannot be said again that the directors of the larger museums have been the moving spirit in the fight to stop the payment of rent. The subscription among the smaller museums is proof to this point. Inasmuch as these gentlemen are the faithful lackeys of the big-business men who constitute their Boards of Directors, they are responsible for the opposition to the principle of rentals and also for the delicate falsehoods in regard to budgets which are given ostensibly as "reasons" why rentals cannot be paid. In their unmitigated insolence these office boys follow the tactics of their economic betters, who club "their" workers with one hand and hire, with profits thereby accrued, little men to compile their collections of art which serve to place the halo of "patron" over their thieving heads.

The agents of big business in the world of art prate eloquently of the glories of art but are very careful to speak only

BETTER no art than art which does not support their ideology and rule. This is not to say, as the eminent Mr. Bulliet would have us believe, that all artists who are demanding rentals are producing work which is antithetical in character to the spirit of rule or ruin. Not at all. However, to those who oppose us the payment of rent is an *issue* which threatens their *policy* in relation to present-day art and they do not intend to relinquish one iota of their control over that policy.

Up to the present time the artists have not understood this placing of the issue. Consequently we have fallen prey to a dangerous extent to the tactics of the opposition which has been to split our ranks as much as possible on the basis of contradictions in interest, to a large extent illusory, which have existed and still exist among us. For instance, the Baltimore Museum has seen fit to pay rentals to a number of so-called "prestige artists" who have national reputations but flatly refuses to pay one penny for the work of the artists of Maryland shown annually in a state-wide exhibition. In other cases the work of local artists has been used to supplant the originally invited work which was not sent because of non-payment of rent. The sponsors of the Carnegie International, in the face of widespread refusal to show by those included in the first list of American painters invited, drew up and sent out a second list. As the result of the two sets of invitations they were able to hang a badly depleted American section. Immense instances could be cited in illustration of the shifting and dodging of our eminent opponents. At one point they begin to carry out a boycott against the purchase of the work of the prominent artists who, on the occasion of exhibitions, demand rent. Somewhere else they bluster, threaten and howl that they will discontinue exhibitions of the work of local artists unless the demand for rent is withdrawn. The most significant fact is that they have not dared to carry out a con-

sistent and national policy of discontinuing the exhibition of contemporary work nor are they able or willing to do so. They have, this is important, yielded to pressure whenever it became clear that unless they did so they would not be able to secure *contemporary work of any kind from any source*.

UP to the present moment the artists have shown that they can and will carry out a serious fight to win rentals. Important national exhibitions have been badly dented by refusals to show. In Baltimore the 1936 Maryland Annual was reduced to a farce by the boycott. In Minnesota important concessions have been won regarding local exhibitions and in St. Louis the artists carried out a splendid public campaign, refusing to show, picketing the Museum and running a counter exhibition.

However, in consideration of all that has been said, it is essential that certain steps be taken immediately, the most important of which is the establishment of a broad and representative committee to lead the fight. This committee must be composed of representatives of all the organizations among the artists which have endorsed rentals. It must be an executive body with authority to act. By means of such a committee adequate exchange of information will be established and a proper co-ordination of activity and direction will be given.

We say that our seeming contradictions in interest are much more apparent than real. They are nurtured and used by those who are our enemies, not only on the issue of rentals but on every issue affecting our future as artists. They are the enemies of art and must be fought with all the determination, resourcefulness and unity of which we have proved to be capable. We say to those members of the American Artists' Congress who are not as yet giving the rental issue their complete support, consider carefully whether this is not of one piece with the fight against war and fascism and whether it would not be proper and consistent for the Congress to make adherence to the rental issue a condition of membership? We suggest to those artists who have in the past acted independently of the opinion of the majority of their fellows that they carefully consider the ultimate rather than the immediate result of such action. The smiles and blandishments practiced by directors upon the individual artist are no assurance of a secure future or a receipt for your framing bill. Rentals will be won, for after the last director has spoken, works of art will still be produced. We have the aces. Let's play them.

A CALL TO MEXICAN ARTISTS AND WRITERS CONGRESS

To the Editors:

The League of Writers and Revolutionary Artists has called a national congress of writers and artists, in agreement with the accompanying thesis, which will take place on January 17, 1937. Although this congress has a national character it concerns vitally the collaboration of writers and artists of all Spanish America. The similarity of economic realities and the uniform social process cause the writers and artists of the Spanish countries on this continent to confront similar problems, some in relation to the community, some with respect to technical questions, and in every field of cultural activity and thought.

For these reasons and with this proposition the LEAR directs itself to you sincerely and forcibly. The sending of your points of view about the questions which we are about to plan before and resolve at this congress—all collaboration, from a simple suggestion to the sending of an amply sustained thesis—which may come from you will be very much appreciated by us.

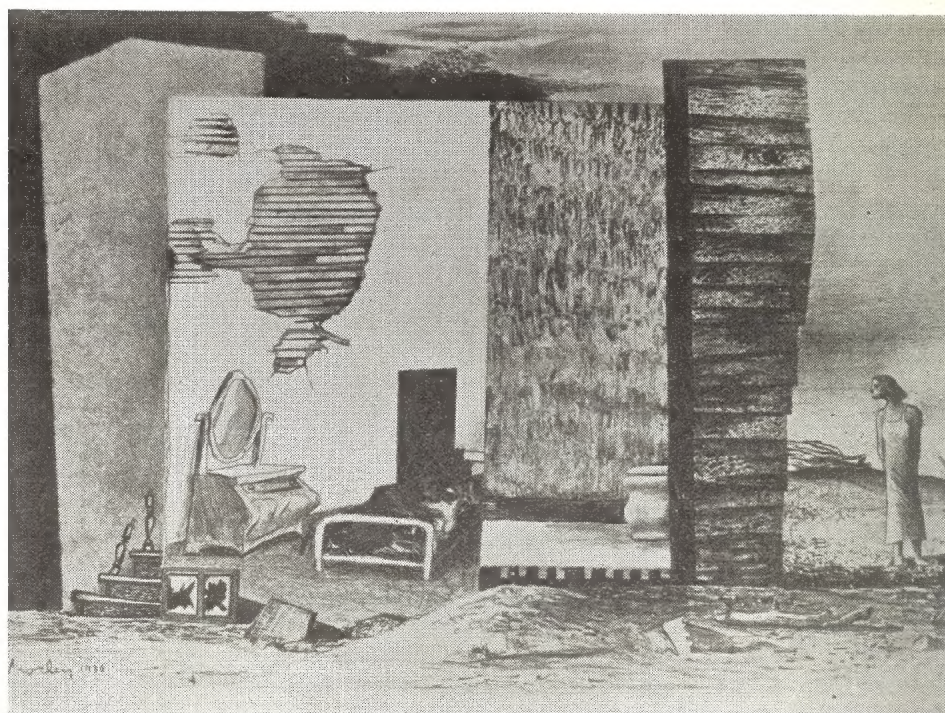
We ask sincerely that you spread the word among the artists and writers of your country, not only that this congress has been called, but our wish to obtain the collaboration which we are asking.

Hoping for good news, I remain, very cordially,

Your comrade and friend,

JUAN MARINELLO,
Foreign Secretary.

The Mexican intellectuals cannot remain indifferent before the events that are moving the world. No person with scientific devotion or spiritual preoccupations can remain indifferent to the gravity of this moment. The universal tragedy of the hour in which we are living is due to the exacerbating encounter—each time more violent—of two enemy forces. One is the vital impulse of humanity found in its superior ideal; the other is the criminal resistance of those who oppose the collective welfare. The first displays its best weapons—those of honesty, of work, of thought—the realization of the projects in execution to obtain a higher life. The second, using the resources of capitalism, of imperialism, of fascism, hires itself for the prolongation of a degraded social state, regardless of the smallest feelings of ethical responsibility. Many intellectuals have understood already that the actual problems affect not only certain sections of society, but all humanity, in its present and in its future organization. Understand, in view of this, that the powerful parasitical enemy has come to injure—to injure today more than ever—the culture which is not the determined trait of a group, but the endowment of its very existence. In order to protect this inheritance, the fruit of centuries of development of the intelligentsia, and of the power of man, the immediate possession of knowledge and understanding is necessary. Therefore the intellectuals of Mexico, far from all egoism, with clear knowledge, offer themselves to work for the celebration of a national congress of writers and artists.



HURRICANE
Lithograph

EUGENE MORLEY

Courtesy American Artists School Christmas Show

The Organizing Committee sends to all writers, men of science and writers of each country, a fraternal call for participation in this congress which will be inaugurated in the City of Mexico on January 17, 1937, with these propositions:

1. Establish, clearly and definitely, what is to be the position of the intellectuals in the present hour before the vital problems which are moving the world and Mexican society.

2. Influence all artists, scientists and writers with the object of discussing the technical problems of their respective activities. Organize the defense of their economic interests, thereby lightening and making possible their social function.

3. Foment the communion of intellectuals with the popular masses with the result of enabling the interpretation of their needs and aspirations.

4. Impress upon the masses the adequate forms and capabilities of enjoying their fruits, the essence and the forms of universal and national culture.

5. Combat all manifestations that im-

plicate a regression in the thought and social conception of the masses and individuals.

6. Defend the democratic liberties already won and procure the adoption of social norms more in accord with the full realization of the human being.

Although this congress is held under the auspices of the L.E.A.R. all artists and scientists interested may take part. The intention of the L.E.A.R. and its firm proposal is to unite all men of art and thought that feel in Mexico an interest to conserve and increase culture and the advancement of a better humanity.

Silvestre Revueltas, President; Julio de la Fuente, Secretary; Juan Marinello, Foreign Secretary; Clara Porset, Organization Secretary; Jorge Juan Crespo de la Serna, Secretary of Press and Propaganda; Enrique Gutmann, Financial Secretary; Alfredo Zalce, Plastic Art Section; Gustavo Ortiz Hernan, Literature; Angel Salas, Theatre; Jesus Mastache, Teaching; Luis Sandi, Music; Enrique Beltran and Fernando Gamboa.

seed of that creature that goes by the name of surrealism, whether the surrealists know it or not.

The old world is coming to an end, struggling frantically in the throes of death; the new world struggles in the pains of birth. In the no man's land that lies between these opposing forces, birth and decay, art cannot yield its richest fruit. In such historical periods, the best and noblest creative energies of man are diverted into channels of revolutionary action. The artist, sensitive to the environmental conditions, reacts by throwing himself into the struggle, or brings his art as a sacrificial offering to the altar of the revolution; to put it more simply, makes his art a weapon.

There are other equally sensitive but politically less conscious artists who, like vaulted caves, echo the despair and agony of the passing system, or, mirror-like, catch the image of death and decay which is reflected in their works; these are the surrealists. Within that charmed or cursed circle of what might be termed "Twilight Art," Futurism, cubism, dadaism, surrealism have their being; by whatever names these forms of expression are known, they have all been spawned by a common mother and engendered by the same father. Their father was bewilderment, their mother was despair, and this half-blind, groping brood shuns the hilltops for the swamps.

Of course, anything is a relief from the dead level of dull, self-satisfied academism, even psychopathological pictorial manifestations, but the insipidity of the one does not justify the insanity of the other.

The purpose of this letter is not to condemn surrealism, but to attempt to look at it from the Marxist point of view. Some of my best friends are surrealists, but any flight from life is a retreat, any commerce with mysticism is surrender, and to lie down with obscurantism is to beget confusion.

My surrealist friends protest that they believe in revolution. Some claim even to be Communists. As men they are revolutionists but as artists they refuse to make art into a weapon. A scare-crow, yes; a weapon? Jamais!

Comrade surrealists, your scare-crows frighten nobody; they only scandalize the naive, titillate the blasé and supply material for the collectors of curiosities. Comrade surrealists, come out of the morgues and cemeteries, vacate the dusty cabinet of Dr. Caligari, take the umbrella off the dissecting table and make despair stop cracking his ridiculous skull against that wall of sea shells. Come, come, roll up your folding watches; it's time to wake up and walk out of your somnambulistic

C O R R E S P O N D E N C E

MR. STIEGLITZ, ON GUARD!

To the Editors:

A myth popped open in New York on the morning of December 3. But the detonation did not achieve quite the shattering damage intended. The myth had been swaddled too long in a wide shepherd's cape and crowned with a flat padre hat. Ear whiskers contributed also to muffling the explosion.

At any rate, the venerably fragile Alfred Stieglitz spread himself over a column and a half of *Herald Tribune* newsprint, asailing W.P.A. art in general and inveighing with blithe inaccuracy against the pay project artists rate for "smearing walls." Mixing marriage, morals and martyrdom with equal indiscrimination, Mr. Stieglitz fumed and spluttered before a feminine audience making a W.P.A. Art Gallery tour in his An American Place. He took the occasion to provide his listeners with titillations the paintings in his gallery failed to supply.

In the subsequent report of this lecture *intime*, Mr. Stieglitz appeared so inextricably tangled in his own verbiage that it is still impossible to believe that he could permit himself to be quoted with such expert fidelity. However, it is not wholly improbable that Mr. Stieglitz authorized each immortal quotation, inasmuch as he expects all his pontifications to be suitably treasured. Witness "America and Alfred Stieglitz," the monument of print erected by his disciples a year or two back.

It is, perhaps, even more lamentable

that one who can so magnanimously hope for jobs for all can not see the paradox of his statement against the W.P.A. Federal Art Project and the artists who are giving it justification and meaning. Before the Armory Show in 1914, and up until recently, Alfred Stieglitz rested too comfortably in the myth of his own responsibility for art in America and for American art. Now that he has abused this fancied responsibility, he believes he has an invulnerable defense in the right of free speech.

But the effectiveness of project artists reveals, in striking contrast, the weakening influence of the Stieglitz cult, and the air has been cleared of stale incense. For all of Stieglitz's ardent championing of American art, only a very few were elected into the charmed circle where he created the myth. Together, the project artists have made it appear a poor instrument of power. Their achievements emphatically demonstrate the pitiful emptiness of his exhortations. For, when the myth popped open, on the morning of December 3, it proved to be a dud.

Lillian Semons.

JAMAIS!

To the Editors:

Marinetti the Futurist, Marinetti the Fascist, who rapturously exclaimed that war is beautiful, that war is desirable because torn flesh is beautiful, because mangled bones are beautiful, because death is beautiful. This Futurist Fascist Marinetti carried in his feverish brain the

trance. Join the ranks of the embattled proletariat. The cohorts of fascism are battering at the gates of culture. There will be time enough in the future to snapshot the subconscious or to conquer the irrational. The need today is to make Art a weapon.
Adolf Wolf.

EXHIBITIONS

A. C. A., 52 W. 8th St.—Mexican exhibit—Dec. 27-Jan. 9.

Tschacbasov—Jan. 10-23. Harriton—Jan. 24-Feb. 6.

Another Place, 43 W. 8th St.—Lenhard till Jan. 19. Recent oils by Joseph Solman—Jan. 20-Feb. 11.

Artists' Gallery, 33 W. 8th St.—De Hirsch Margolies through January.

Brunner, 53 E. 57th St.—Derain through Jan. 2. Zadkine, one of Europe's foremost sculptors—Jan. 15 through March 15.

Downtown Gallery, 11 W. 13th St.—Carl Walters' ceramics and group of young Americans.

Guild Art Gallery, 37 W. 57th St.—One man show of Jacques Zucker, January. Group show including Forbes, Reisman, Menkes.

Marie Harriman, 61 E. 57th St.—Jan. 4 through 31, modern French painters.

Julien Levy, 602 Madison Ave.—Dali through Jan. 14. Ruffino Tamayo, well-known Mexican painter, with new works, Jan. 15-31.

Macbeth, 11 E. 57th St.—Centennial exhibition of Winslow Homer, Dec. 15-Jan. 18.

Midtown, 605 Madison Ave.—Dec. 26-Jan. 9, work of Margaret Huntington. Jan. 11-25 Myron Sokole.

Museum of Modern Art, 11 W. 53rd St.—Surrealism with a bang, including at least six one-man shows of important Europeans, through Jan. 17. Best side show in years. Jan. 27-Feb. 21, Modern English Architecture and posters by E. McKnight Kauffer, who ranks with Cassandre.

New Art Circle, Neumann, 509 Madison Ave.—Oils by Arnold Friedman, through January.

Valentine, 16 E. 57th St.—Adelaide de Groot, recent paintings, Dec. 22-Jan. 2. Jan. 4-26, water colors by Cezanne and drawings by Renoir.

Whitney Museum, 10 W. 8th St.—January, Winslow Homer.

NOTE: Last month's cover, "Death Comes for the Children," came from an anti-war exhibition of the Smith College Museum of Art at Northampton, Massachusetts. It is from the collection of Mr. Erich Cohn of New York City.

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Note: 'What Is Happening in China?'

a lecture by Harry Gannes, Dr. Lin, R. A. Howell, editor "China Today," on Friday, Jan. 8, 8 P.M., Irving Plaza Hall. Tickets now at all bookshops, 25c

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